

NEWSLETTER ISSUE 44 FEBRUARY, 2004

GIFT FROM BANKA ESTATE TOPS ALL PRIOR GIFTS TO SOCIETY

The German Society has just received a check in the sum of \$47,000 from the Estate of Edward M. Banka, issued by Theodore J. Potthast, Jr., Mr. Banka's personal representative. A committee to suggest uses of the funds is preparing a report for the executive committee, which will then make its recommendation to the Board of Directors.

Ed Banka was born in Germany, was drafted into the army, fought in General Rommel's Afrika Korps, was captured and brought to America as a prisoner of war. At age 17 he was offered US citizenship if he joined the US army to fight Japan. At the end of the war he learned that all his relatives in Germany had died and he made a career as an airman in the U.S. Air Force. When he retired at the Soldiers' and Airmen's Home in Washington, D.C., he visited Blob's Park and learned of the German Society of Maryland and became a member. He called Ted Potthast, then the Society's counselor, to say that he wanted to leave his estate to the Society. Ted became friends with him, and since Ed had no family, named Ted as his "next of kin". He died December 30, 2002 and was buried with full military honors in Arlington Cemetery.

He was born Dieter Langsdorf, but when he was being promoted to the rank of sergeant and placed in command of American troops, the army wanted him to get rid of his German accent and sent him to a special school created for that purpose. The army also required him to get a new name (not so German) and gave him a book of names. He liked the sound of Edward Michael Banka and obtained his US citizenship under that name.

EVENTS PLANNED FOR 2004

The Board of Directors is already drafting its calendar of events for 2004. The regular program includes the annual meeting of members in April, the high school German language awards presentation in May, the picnic in June, the ecumenical service on Michaelmas (feast day of St. Michael) at the end of September and the annual awards banquet in November. The Society is also planning to celebrate the 150th anniversary of our most famous member, Ottmar Mergenthaler, known around the world as "the second Gutenberg" for his invention of the linotype machine. The Society is a member of AGAS, the Associated German American Association of Greater Washington and will participate in its two events at Blobs's Park in May and November. We will join with the United German American Joint Action Committee (UGAJAC) in celebrating German American day in October in Washington. UGAJAC is composed of three national organizations, D.A.N.K, UGAC/USA (both of which our Society is a member) and The Steuben Society. We will also join with other organizations in supporting the activities of the organizations which are also members of Das Deutschamerikanischer Bürgerverein von Maryland, including the Society for the History of the Germans in Maryland (our sister Society), the Edelweiss Club and the Baltimore Kickers. Specific events and activities will be announced via this newsletter and special notices mailed to our membership.

The Society is looking for new ways to encourage young people to engage in the study of the German language and culture. If you have suggestions in this regard, please contact our office or one of our officers or directors.

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KALENDER

- Feb. 21 - Karneval Ball at Zion
- April 16 - Annual membership meeting
- May 1 - Maifest at Zion
- May 2 - AGAS German heritage festival at Blob's Park
- May 14 - Awards ceremony for high school students
- May 22-23 Kickers' Springfest in Dundalk
- June - German Society Annual picnic
- August 20-22 German Festival (?)
- September - Ecumenical Service - Michaelmas
- Oct 9-10 Maryland Oktoberfest 5th Regiment Armory
- November - Annual Awards Banquet
- November 14 - AGAS festival at Blob's Park

Visit the German Society's website: www.germansociety-md.com

For more local German-American happenings, check the web site of the Deutschamerikanischer Bürgerverein von Maryland: www.md-germans.org

Tune in to the Edelweiss Hour every Sunday: Radio 750 AM 9 am

OFFICIAL NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the German Society will hold its annual meeting on Friday, April 16 at 8 p.m. at Zion Church dining room, Lexington Street at City Hall Plaza, Baltimore, Maryland 21202, for the election of six directors, and for such other business as shall properly come before the meeting. The nominating committee will recommend a slate of directors. Any member wishing to nominate another member as a director must do so by sending a written notice to the Society by letter postmarked prior to March 16, 2004 addressed as follows: The German Society of Maryland, Nominating Committee, P. O. Box 22585, Baltimore, MD 21203-4585

PLAN TO ATTEND THE ANNUAL MEETING ON APRIL 16 AT ZION

Our annual meeting will take place the Friday after Easter in the dining room of the Zion Church, City Hall Plaza. A dinner and drinks will be provided to all in attendance, free of cost. Members are invited to bring their family and any prospects for Society membership. The doors open for dinner at 6:30 P.M. and the meeting starts promptly at 8 and ends not later than 9. Please plan to attend.

THE MENCKEN HOUSE FOSTERS INTEREST IN LIFE OF HENRY L.

Baltimore City is preparing to turn over the home of H. L. Mencken to a non-profit group which will renovate it and make it available to the public as a museum and a writer's center. *The Baltimore Sun* has donated over \$100,000 for the historic renovation work on the house in Union Square, but the Mencken organization still needs to raise more funds for the project. Mencken, known as *The Sage of Baltimore*, is Maryland's most famous and prolific author. Mencken, who graduated from Baltimore's Poly high school and did not go to college, nevertheless was respected and feared by the academic and political world for his scathing analysis of the issues of his day. He spoke fluent German and even translated and commented on the works of the German philosopher, Nietzsche. Though not a "joiner", Mencken was proud of his German heritage and was member of our sister society, The Society for the History of the Germans in MD.

Phil Hildebrandt, a member of our Society and a past president and active director of the Mencken house corporation, invites our members to become active in the work of preserving and activating the Mencken House. If you would like to assist, call Phil at 410-566-6933. The corporation has a couple openings for directors. Phil suggests that our Society sponsor a session to tour the house, hear a brief lecture on Mencken's life and works and see the exhibits in the house, followed by coffee and refreshments, for a fee of \$10. The tentative date is Sunday, May 16.

GERMAN MAUSER FOR SALE

One of the items inherited by our Society from the estate of Edward M. Banka is a German army rifle, a Mauser, made in Germany in 1943. We took it to an appraiser who told us it is in fair condition and that we should get a minimum of \$200 for it. The appraiser said that it could be used for hunting or target practice. Ammunition can be purchased at local gun stores. It is being offered to members, on the basis of sealed bids.

If you are interested, mail your bid in the minimum of \$200 to our office. The bids must be received by April 9. Write "BID" on the outside of the envelope. The envelopes will be opened on April 16. All checks will be returned, except to the successful bidder.

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The Society's annual report for 1922 was published in a pamphlet which contained this:

"AN INVITATION

If, after looking at this report, you are interested, we further invite you to become a member of The German Society, thereby identifying yourself with its past, present and future.

The German Society is a new-world organization, not professing any part in old-world hatreds or political divisions. It was formed by men of every faith and from all the German-speaking countries of Europe. It is non-sectarian and has so consistently held from the beginning.

It should be a matter of pride and an enviable distinction to respond to this invitation, for in works of charity there can be no differences. A hearty welcome awaits you."

150th ANNIVERSARY OF BIRTH OF MERGENTHALER, SOCIETY MEMBER

Our Society will celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of our most famous member, Ottmar Mergenthaler, the inventor of the linotype machine which revolutionized the newspaper and printing industries and gained for him the title of "The Second Gutenberg". He was born May 10, 1854 in Germany and immigrated to the USA, spending many years in Baltimore where he joined the German Society of Maryland. He was also a member of Zion Church, which has a stained glass window in its narthex depicting him and his invention. His crystal chandelier, given by his widow, hangs in Zion's library. His daughter also attended the dedication of the Mergenthaler Technical School in Baltimore in the 1950's. The Society's plans for celebrating the anniversary are being prepared by our board of directors and will be announced shortly.

ANNUAL DUES ARE DUE NOW

If you have not yet sent in your dues, we ask that you do so promptly. The Society relies heavily on this income. Of the \$15 annual dues, about \$10 is spent for member services, including newsletter, postage, mailing of notices and events for members, the annual meeting. The remaining \$5 goes to rent and clerical expense. Our projects are funded by donations and investments. Our directors and officers receive no "perks" and spend their own money in the performance of their work for the Society.

ARTHUR NIEBERDING ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT AS DIRECTOR

Due to the demands made upon him by his business, Art Nieberding notified President Schaub that he would retire as a director, effective as of the Society's annual meeting. Art is the president and owner of Noble Engineering, a Bel Air, Maryland firm. Art has served as chairman of both the Society's annual picnic and our annual awards banquet. His superb organizational skills have made these events the highlights of the Society's annual program. Art will remain an active member of the Society and has left open the possibility that he will return as a director when his schedule permits.

NEWS OF OUR MEMBERS

...**Judge John F. Fader, II** retired from the bench and is now on the faculty of the University of Maryland School of Law, monitoring the training of students who appear in court as pro bono attorneys. Judge Fader took an early retirement after 28 years on the bench. He was the chief judge of the Circuit Court for Baltimore County. Prior to ascending to the bench, he was a partner in the law firm of Potthast and Fader.

...**Governor Robert Ehrlich** took a swim in the icy waters of the Chesapeake Bay at the January 24th Polar Bear event at Sandy Point State Park for the benefit of the Special Olympics for the handicapped. The water registered 28° F. 1900 other brave souls followed him and raised \$500,000 for the charity.

...at the request of the Curley family, Loyola College re-dedicate its Curley athletic field, naming it in honor

of our deceased member, **Diane Geppi-Aikens**. Before her death last June at age 40, Diane served as Loyola's assistant athletic director and coach of its women's lacrosse team. She achieved national acclaim for her dauntless spirit and leadership.

KICKERS PLAN GERMAN SPRING EVENT IN DUNDALK, MAY 21 - 22

The Baltimore Kickers, a fellow member of the Bürger-verein, has scheduled a German event in Essex for Saturday and Sunday, May 21 and 22. Although it is not called a festival, it will have all of trappings of a German ethnic party, with beer and wurst stands, tents and picnic tables, with many activities for the family. Our Society has been invited to participate. Some may join in a program of Grimms' fairy tales for children.

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SISTER MARY VIRGINA GEIGER,

PROMINENT MEMBER OF OUR SOCIETY

One of our most prominent and erudite members, Sister Mary Virginia Geiger, professor and author, died January 28 at the age of 88. She was a member of the School Sisters of Notre Dame and taught at the College of Notre Dame of Maryland for 62 years. She was the recipient of the Freedom Foundation's American Patriot's Medal, and the "Sears-Roebuck Foundation Teaching Excellence and Campus Leadership Award". The College of Notre Dame established a Geiger scholarship, a Geiger Chair in philosophy and an annual Geiger lecture on ethics and society. She entered the Schools Sisters in 1933, received a degree in history from the College of Notre Dame, a doctorate in history and philosophy from the Catholic University of America and did post-doctoral work on Charles Carroll of Carrollton at Georgetown University, Fairfield University and the University of Arizona. She wrote two books on Daniel Carroll, a framer of the Constitution, and wrote many scholarly articles. As a professor at CND she taught philosophy and history. She brought over 50 historians and philosophers to her campus for a series of lectures entitled "Conversations with Humanists: Philosophical Views on the Declaration of Independence."

She was one of her school's most esteemed faculty members. A fellow faculty member did a survey among the College's alumnae which asked for their favorite faculty member. 800 responded for Sister Virginia.

When invited to join the German Society, she responded enthusiastically, saying that she was proud of her German heritage. She is survived by her sister who also belongs to the Notre Dame order, Sr. Eugene Marie Geiger, SSND.

GENEALOGY SESSION SET FOR APRIL 24 IN BOWIE , MD.

The Mid Atlantic Germanic Society (MAGS) will hold a conference on Saturday, April 24 at the Comfort Inn, Bowie , MD. Four topics will be presented: "Finding German Ancestors in the Nation's Capitol"; "Teasing the Silent Women from the Shadows of History"; "Using German Church Records in Germany and the U.S."; and "Taxes: Milk them for all they're worth." Registration fee, which includes lunch, is \$35 for MAGS members and \$40 for non-members, if registered by April 10. You may register with Diane Kuster, 2511 Serpentine Drive , Bayville , NJ 08721 or via the MAGS website: www.rootsweb.com/~usmags/

BOB SHEPPARD ENDS 28 YEARS AS BÜRGERVEREIN PRESIDENT

Bob Sheppard, who led Der Deutschamerikanischer Bürgerverein von Maryland as its president for 28 years, did not accept a new term, which would have been a certainty had he wished to continue. Bob's tenure in office brought national prestige to the Maryland German societies through his close ties with the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany and his relationship with local and national German American organizations. Most Maryland German Americans cannot remember a Bürgerverein which did not have Bob as its president. Bob has been a long-time member of our own Society. In addition to his role as Bürgerverein president, he was the moving force behind the Baltimore German Festival, held annually in August, and the Maryland Oktoberfest held for many years in the 5th Regiment Armory. Bob gave an annual accounting of his job as President, astonishing the membership with the fact that he attended an average of 160 meetings or events each year representing the Maryland German American community.

In recent years Bob struggled against the general decline of European ethnic organizations and helped Maryland German Americans to hold their own. However, each year it has become more and more difficult to generate interest in ethnic traditions, especially among the younger folks. Bob's successor has a tough job cut out for him.

The German Society of Maryland extends its deep appreciation to Bob Sheppard for his hard work and magnificent accomplishments over the past 28 years. A special tribute to Bob was discussed at a recent meeting of our directors.

Elections for a new president are set for February 27. Candidates for the job are Bob Gibson, president of the Baltimore Kickers, Tom Werner, a member of our Society and Club Fidelitas, and Dottie Kirchner, an officer of GBTV Immergrün.

ANN BLAIR, FRIEND OF SOCIETY

Sophia Anna Blair, nee Vogt, died December 26. She was born in Ober-Breidenbach, Hessen , Germany on Dec. 7, 1906 . Her father, a Lutheran minister, was sent to a mission in Pennsylvania where he brought his family. She returned to Germany for her education. Ann was the widow of Judge Henry Blair and is survived by a sister in Germany . Several members of our Society attended her memorial service at Zion Church . Betty Niemann, a director of our Society, is her executors. along with Ann's great-nephew, Michael Hyngar, of Hamburg , Germany .

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UGAC OPENS D.C. HEADQUARTERS

The United German American Committee of the USA , of which our Society is a member, opened its new national headquarters on February 1 at 1901 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Suite 902 , Washington , D.C. , just two blocks from the White House. The Committee was founded in Philadelphia on June 5, 1977 by Rev. Dr. Hans R. Haug, a German immigrant.

The Committee will continue to hold its annual meeting at the Cannstatter Volkfest Verein in Philadelphia . UGAC's president is Berm E. Deichmann. Its first vice president is Dr. Volker Schmeissner, who is a member of our own Society. Within UGAC is its prestigious "Council of 1000" which holds an annual banquet at which it grants an award to The Distinguished German American of the Year. The banquet was held in November, 2003 in Anaheim , California and the awardees were Maria and Walter Brand, researchers and chroniclers of San Francisco 's German heritage. Some members of our Society are individual members of UGAC/USA.

CARROLL COUNTY RESIDENTS FORM GERMAN LANGUAGE CLUB

Under the leadership of Ken Davidson, a group of Carroll Countians has formed the Westminster German Language and Travel club. Davidson started taking German lessons at the Kickers Club, but found the drive to Baltimore too difficult. He took all the classes offered by Carroll County Community College , but wanted more, so he formed the new club. It operates in an informal manner and German speaking members of the club teach the others. The club is planning a tour along Germany 's Romantic Road this summer. The club welcomes new members. For information call Ken Davidson at 410-239-0999. (Thanks to Walter Moreau of Westminster for notifying us of the new club.)

EDWARD A. DOEHLER, 94

Edward Doehler, a prominent German Marylander, died January 12 in Timonium. He was the oldest living alumnus of Loyola High School , where he graduated in 1926. He graduated from Loyola College , obtained a M.A and PhD degree from Georgetown and spent fifty five

years teaching history at Loyola College which awarded him an honorary doctorate in 1996. He was an expert on pre-Columbian cultures in Latin America .

MERL E. ARP - SOCIETY DIRECTOR

Merl Arp was a well-known and highly respected member of the German American community when the Society solicited him to become a director three years ago. Since accepting that role, he has made major contributions to our efforts. Merl is our link to DANK, the German American National Congress for which he serves as a national vice-president. He lives in Montgomery County and also links us to the Associated German American Societies of Greater Washington of which he is an officer. He is a member of six other German American organizations and serves as newsletter editor of the American Schleswig - Holstein Heritage Society.

Merl is a native of Iowa . He worked briefly in private industry before joining the U. S. Air Force in 1951. After military service, Merl attended the University of Iowa (A.B., M.A.). In 1960 he entered the Foreign Service of the U. S. Department of State, spending the next twenty-eight years serving in the State Department and in embassies and consulates in Canada , Africa , East Asia and Europe . He also attended the National Defense University . In 1975, Merl, his wife, Jean, and their five daughters moved to Montgomery County , Maryland . Since his retirement, he has been very active in the programs of the German American community in Maryland , Washington and nationally. His position as national vice-president of DANK requires frequent trips to its headquarters in Chicago .

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HOSPITAL COSTS GO THROUGH THE ROOF: UP FROM \$1.00 PER DAY

In 1913 when the Sisters of St. Francis managed St. Joseph Hospital on Caroline Street in Baltimore , the daily room rate was \$1 and the use of the operating room cost \$5. Sister Mary Georgina collected the hospital fees and issued the receipts. A copy of such a receipt is shown above. In those days it was known as **ST. JOSEPH'S GERMAN HOSPITAL** . A few years later, during World War I when hostility toward all things German was rampant in the USA , the word "German" was dropped from the hospital's name. When the Caroline Street hospital was about to be condemned in the 1960's, some doctors on the medical staff found some land on York Road in Towson and persuaded the sisters to move the hospital there. It is now known as The St. Joseph Medical Center, and many of the Sisters of St. Francis still live in the attached convent and work at the hospital.

GRANDFATHER'S 1938 TRIP TO GERMANY - BRINGING BACK TOYS

When the German American F.A.O. Schwarz toy store closed its doors in New York last month, memories of toys from Germany recalled my grandfather's 1937 German trip. Upon his return from a 3 month vacation in Germany , he summoned his 4 grandchildren (Ted, Jack, John and Dick) to his home on Bentalou Street and opened a great steamer trunk filled with toys. The 4 of us sat at his feet as he leaned over the trunk and reached for the toys. He called our names and handed a toy to each of us, over and over again. It was Christmas in September! My favorite toy was a metal submarine that really worked. My aversion to the bathtub suddenly vanished, since I could wind up the submarine's propellor and watch its underwater journey from one end of the tub to the other, endlessly, until mother dragged me away to dry off my waterlogged skin. Aunt Elizabeth was with Granddad on the trip and helped him select the toys. When I made my first trip to Germany 50 years later, I met one of Elizabeth 's German girlfriends who recalled the long-ago visit. She painted a picture of my grandfather which I never knew: she told how, during that summer, he would stroll through the forest accompanied by a group of little girls, encouraging them to sing folk songs as they walked along, stopping only to pick wild flowers or to rest by a stream. **TJP**

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SCHROEDER TO BUSH RE: SADDAM

TEXT OF CONGRATULATORY LETTER

"Sehr geherter Herr Präsident,

mit grosser Freude habe ich von der Festnahme von Saddam Hussein erfahren ich beglückwünsche Sie zu dieser erfolgreichen Aktion.

Saddam Hussein hat unsägliches Leid über sein eigenes Volk und die ganze Region gebracht. I hoffe, dass seine Festnahme die Bemühungen der internationalen Gemeinschaft zum Wiederaufbau und Stabilisierung des Irak forden wird.

Mit freundlichen Grüssen,

Gerhard Schröder

Bundeskanzler der Bundesrepublik Deutschland"

GERMANS DEBATE MILITARY DRAFT

Every German man can be drafted into the army, presently for 9 months. The draft was in force since post WWII Germany, but the constitution forbade German troops fighting on foreign soil. While the USA protected Germans from the Russians, the German boys had little to fear. The law changed in the 1990's to provide German troops to serve on peace-keeping missions in places like Bosnia and Afghanistan. Now 90,000 conscientious objectors provide cheap labor as German social workers. Two groups now debate the draft. The social agencies want to keep the draft, since the objectors are a source of inexpensive labor. The unions want to abolish the draft in order to create 90,000 new jobs. The military also seems to want to abolish the draft so it can emulate the Americans and build an efficient career army, which was able to overrun Iraq in barely a month.

CHINA PASSES GERMANY AS WORLD'S BIGGEST TOYMAKER

Most of the toys under America's Christmas trees now come from China. Germany's Erzgebirge region formerly held sway as the world capital for toys and ornaments for Christmas trees. Now the Pearl River delta on China's southeast coast has replaced Germany as the world leader. The southeast China coast is known as "the factory of the world", exporting \$300 million in goods each day. 10% of its production winds up in the USA on the shelves of the Walmart stores.

VOLKSWAGEN MAKES MANY MORE WURSTS THAN AUTOMOBILES

VW made 1.5 million wursts last year but only 550,000 autos, according to the Wall Street Journal. Our treasurer Mike Nieberding, who keeps his eyes open for such interesting German tidbits, sent us the clipping. The VW butcher shop makes its popular currywurst for a dozen VW plants and offices and hopes to expand its operations across Europe. At one time VW had its own cattle herd, vegetable farm and greenhouses. The currywurst is sold in the local stadium during soccer games at the equivalent of \$2.88 for two wursts with VW's own spicy ketchup. The currywurst is on the menu of Autostadt's room service menu. VW's corporate chef, Nils Potthast, said

that although the firm could do quite well by marketing its wurst, he will not push it because it might not be wise to put VW's name on a meat product. The formula for the wurst is as carefully guarded as the automakers other important trade secrets. Only three people in the firm know the secret, not even Potthast.

GERMANS WERE EATING HOT DOGS BEFORE CHRIS FOUND AMERICA

In 1987 the city of Frankfurt celebrated the 500th anniversary of the invention of the hot dog, which they still call Frankfurters..1487, five years before Columbus discovered America. Germans call our hot dogs *Würstchen mit Milchbrötchen* (little wursts with milk-bread). The USA is the world's champion in consuming hot dogs: 20 billion per year. At major league baseball games alone, we eat 25.9 million of them. The New York Yankees lead the way with 1.8 million, and the Los Angeles Dodgers are in 2nd place.

The history of the wurst is said to be ancient, some claiming Homer mentioned it in his *Odyssey* in 900 B.C. A record shows that in Coburg, Germany in 1600, a butcher, Johann Georghehner, made a Wurst which he named a "kleiner Hund", a little dog, since it reminded him of a dachshund. In 1860 a German immigrant is said to have sold hot dogs on a bun with sauerkraut on the sidewalks of New York. The first time hot dogs were sold in a baseball park was by a German immigrant, Chris Von de Ahe in the stadium of the St. Louis Browns (now the Baltimore Orioles)

Some of the names used for our hot dogs in European countries are:

Denmark - Grillposer;	Germany - Heisser Hund
France - Chien chaud;	Italy - Caldo cane
Portugal - Cachorro quente;	Sweden - Korv
Spain - Perrito caliente	Czech Repub.- Park vrohliiku